

Lives of Scottish Saints in the Aberdeen Breviary: some problems of sources for Strathclyde saints

ALAN MACQUARRIE, M.A., Ph.D.

It has been noted by several writers that the sources for the *lectiones* for the proper feast-days of Scottish saints recorded in the Aberdeen Breviary (1509; hereafter *BA*) are many and varied.¹ It is perhaps not always appreciated how much information can be gleaned about the development of a saint's legend from these brief and often tantalising *lectiones*. This can provide valuable direct evidence about the development of the saint's cult and the history of his or her churches; very occasionally it can also provide indirect evidence about the historical personage behind the legend.

Given the long gap which in most cases exists between a saint's lifetime and the drawing up of a *vita*, there is little likelihood of strict historical accuracy in such *vitae*, even if that was what the compilers had been aiming for. The unwary will often assume that a medieval *vita* or saint's life is a statement of known facts about the subject's life, admixed with legends which were widely believed to be true. This is true in a very few examples, of which Adomnan's *Life of St Columba* is probably the best.² In many more cases a *vita* was drawn up long

¹ J.D. Galbraith, "The Sources of the Aberdeen Breviary" (Aberdeen University M.Litt. thesis, 1970); L.J. Macfarlane, *William Elphinstone and the Kingdom of Scotland, 1431-1514* (Aberdeen, 1985), 231-46; A. Boyle, "Some Saints Lives in the Breviary of Aberdeen", *Analecta Bollandiana*, lxxxiv (1976), 95-106; *idem*, "Notes on Scottish Saints", *Innes Review*, xxxii (1981), 59-82; J. MacQueen, "A Lost Glasgow Life of St Thaney (St Enoch)", *IR*, vi (1955), 125-30; A. Macquarrie, "Medieval Scotland", in *Hagiographies: International History of the Latin and Vernacular Hagiographical Literature in the West from its Origins to 1550*, ed. G. Philippart (Turnholt, 1994), i, 487-501, at 495-9.

² Adomnan's *Life of Columba*, ed. A.O. and M.O. Anderson (2nd edn., Oxford, 1991); P. Ó Riain, "Towards a Methodology in early Irish Hagiography", *Peritia*, i (1982), 146-59; M. Herbert, *Iona, Kells and Derry* (Oxford, 1988); J.M. Picard,

after the saint's death when the facts of his/her life had either become a faint memory or had faded completely. All that the writer had to go on were some dedications and place-names, possibly the existence of some relics or a shrine, and perhaps some traditions or folk-tales relating to these relics.

The writer would also have at his disposal all the conventions of hagiography, most notably a stock of miracle stories on which he could draw. He would be more concerned to set out the pretensions of a particular church, the extent of its properties and jurisdiction, the fame and sanctity of its founder, and the power of its relics; historical accuracy, though often claimed in saint's lives, was very much a subordinate consideration.

It must also be remembered that the Celtic peoples delighted in storytelling. The secular legends like the *Tain* were full of exaggeration and supernatural phenomena, visitors from the otherworld, and a striking level of violence, torture and suffering. So it was only natural that stories of saints, the new heroes of Christianity, should be in a similar vein.³ Saints pray, fast, and mortify the flesh on a heroic scale. They recite the entire Psalter while plunged up to the neck in an icy torrent, then go to bed in a stone coffin. They battle against dragons and demons with supernatural weapons provided by angelic supporters. When they die, after unnaturally prolonged lifespans, they patiently endure torments and sickness which would discourage the most steadfast of ordinary men.

Sometimes a saint's *vita* explains traditions about his or her relics, or the multiplication of relics, which presumably were still venerated at the time of writing. For example, in *Vita Sancti Servani* there is a story about St Serf having four staves cut (one of them by the hand of an angel) from a tree growing on Mount Zion; the presumption must be that several churches claimed to own the "staff of St Serf" in the

"The Purpose of Adomnan's *Vita Columbae*", *Peritia*, i (1982), 160-77; A. Macquarrie, "St Columba and his lay Contemporaries in Scotland and Ireland", *ante*, xxv (1994), 188-203.

³ D. Bray, "Some Aspects of Hagiography in the Celtic Church", *ante*, xxi (1983), 111-26.

twelfth century, and this story explained why.⁴ This is not the most extreme case of its kind. After his death the body of St Baldred of Tynninghame was triplicated so that each of his three churches – Tynninghame, Prestonkirk, and Oldham – could hold his remains.⁵

There is a modern tendency to be mildly shocked at such exaggeration. But we are not worried by the story in Irish legend of the swine of Manannan, slaughtered nightly so that the Tuatha De Danann could feast on roast pork, and resuscitated the following day to suffer the same fate and provide the gods with an endless supply of fresh meat; why should we be worried that St Serf performs the same miracle for a peasant at Alva after he had slaughtered his only pig to provide the saint with a meal?⁶ The stories were intended to edify and terrify, to encourage visits to shrines, veneration of relics, respect for rights and property, and the giving of alms; but they were also intended to entertain. The Celts were master storytellers, who delighted in blending fact with legend, the homely with the supernatural. This is as true of their sacred legends as it is of their secular literature.

My intention here is to examine in detail the *lectiones* in *BA* for several saints of the Strathclyde area, to see if we can assign them approximate or precise dates, to explore what they may tell us about the history of the saint's church or churches, and to see whether we can draw any general conclusions about *BA*'s sources and its compilers' use of them.

1. *St Kentigern*

As St Kentigern or Mungo of Glasgow may well be taken as the "senior saint" of Strathclyde, and as his city has become the modern heart of the modern (and soon to disappear) region, it is worth discussing him first. It is also worth discussing him first for another

⁴ A. Macquarrie, "Vita Sancti Servani: the Life of St Serf", *IR*, xliv (1993), 122-52, at 138, 146 & n.

⁵ *Breviarium Aberdonense* (Edinburgh, 1509; facsimile edn. Spalding and Maitland Clubs, 1854) [hereafter *BA*], PH, 6 March; see A.O. Anderson, *Early Sources of Scottish History* (Edinburgh, 1922, reprinted Stamford, 1990), i, 242.

⁶ Macquarrie, "Vita Sancti Servani", 142, 151 and n.

reason: the *lectiones* for his feastday in *BA* present some interesting and typical problems.⁷

For the *lectiones* of St Kentigern (13 January), the compilers of *BA* had a fairly obvious source on which they could draw: the stylish and unimpeachably orthodox *Vita Sancti Kentigerni* of the Cistercian monk Jocelin of Furness, written c. 1180. This had superseded several predecessors to become the predominant source for Kentigern's *vita* at Glasgow Cathedral, where it was certainly in use in the 1430s and probably long after; it survives in several MSS.⁸ But, surprisingly, the compilers did not use this source. For the most part the *BA lectiones* describe incidents which are also found in Jocelin's *Vita Kentigerni*, but there are enough differences to make it certain that their source is not Jocelin's *vita* as we now know it. The *lectiones* begin with a very brief summary of Kentigern's parentage, making him son of Eugenius Eufuren king of Cumbria (Jocelin does not have this name) and Teneuu daughter of Loth king of Laudonia (also unknown to Jocelin); she comes by sea to *Culros* and is baptised by Servanus (she is nameless in Jocelin until St Serf baptizes her Taneu). There is no mention in the *lectiones* of a virginal conception, which is discussed at length by Jocelin and rejected in favour of a more rational explanation; nor is reason given why Teneuu was cast into the sea, which again is treated in full by Jocelin. There follow anecdotes familiar also from Jocelin, concerning St Serf's pet robin (prominent on the arms of Glasgow), the fire in Serf's monastery, and the death of his cook. Kentigern's passage of the Forth is described, followed by his meeting with the old man Fergus, though there is no mention of the foundation of the church of Glasgow at this point. The next incident in the *lectiones* is the loss and recovery of the queen's ring (also on the Glasgow arms); this differs

⁷ *BA*, PH, 13 January.

⁸ Edited by A.P. Forbes in *Lives of SS Ninian and Kentigern* (*Historians of Scotland*, v; Edinburgh, 1874) (hereafter *VK*). Bishop Forbes' introduction enumerates the various MSS. An inventory of the Cathedral's books compiled in the early 1430s mentions a book of the *vitae* of St Serf and St Kentigern which was then on the chanter's stall, and which is probably the MS now in Marsh's Library in Dublin; cf. *Glasgow Registrum*, ii, 335. See Macquarrie, "Vita Sancti Servani", 122n., 134-5 and *passim*.

significantly from Jocelin's version in that Jocelin calls her *Langwoeth*, whereas *BA* calls her simply *regina de Cadyhouu*, queen of Cadzow (now Hamilton). The *lectiones* go on to describe Kentigern's recall from Wales, without explaining or previously mentioning his exile, his meetings with *Redrath* king of Glasgu (*Rederech* in Jocelin) and with St Columba *ad torrentem vocatur Malyndinor* (Jocelin has *Mellingdenor*, but does not call it a burn), and, very briefly, his old age and death, with a summary of other points: how he would recite the entire Psalter while sitting on stones in freezing water, and how while singing mass his body would levitate off the ground at the words *sursum corda* (*Et cum "sursum corda" decanteret, corpus eius in aere a terra elevabatur*). This last fantastic detail is not in Jocelin, who says simply that when Kentigern lifted his hands when he said *sursum corda* he held up his own [heart] to the Lord while exhorting others to do the same (*Dum enim elevatis in modum crucis manibus, "sursum corda" diceret, ad quod ceteros ammonuit, suum habebat ad Dominum*). The two passages are clearly related, but Jocelin is more restrained and indeed remarkably tame by his usual exuberant standard; he may have toned down or misunderstood an original which was more fantastic.⁹ If so, it appears that the *BA* version may in places be truer to their common original than is Jocelin's.

Thus the source of the *BA lectiones* is clearly related to, but not identical with, Jocelin's *vita*. The *lectiones* draw freely on material which is also in Jocelin, but differs in some significant details, e.g., spellings of names, the name of the queen of Cadzow and the Molendinar (Jocelin knows a *locus nomine Mellingdenor ubi sanctus tunc degere solebat*, but does not know that it is a burn). *BA* does not appear to have had the story of Kentigern's conception and Teneu's tribulations which is found in Jocelin, nor does he have detailed information about Kentigern's exile in Wales or his death, although these are briefly alluded to, perhaps on the basis of Glasgow tradition.

All the material which is detailed in *BA* seems to come from a Gaelic cultural background: the Fife material, the meetings with Serf,

⁹ VK, 186-7.

Fergus and Columba, the queen's ring, Kentigern's miraculous masses, asceticism and longevity. The *lectiones*, indeed, appear to be an abbreviation of a Gaelic-orientated *vita* of Kentigern which was also used by Jocelin of Furness in the composition of his *vita*.

Jocelin tells us a little about the sources which he used in compiling his *vita*. He states that he had wandered about through the broad and narrow streets of the city of Glasgow, seeking for a *vita* which would be of greater authority and accuracy and in a better style than that which was in regular use in the cathedral (*quam vestra frequentat ecclesia*); this *vita*, he says, is in an unkempt style, and at the very beginning is marred by a narration which is contrary to sound doctrine and Catholic teaching. During his search he found "another little volume, dictated in a Gaelic style" (*codiculum alium, stilo Scottico dictatum*), full of solecisms, but containing the *vita* and acts of the saint. This he took from its barbarous wrappings, and set himself the task "to stitch together the material collected from both books" (*ex utroque libello materiam collectam redintegrando sarcire*).¹⁰

All the evidence suggests that the Aberdeen *lectiones* are an abbreviation of Jocelin's source "dictated in a Gaelic style", with some additional information provided, not in any detail, from another source, possibly generalised Glasgow tradition. Some of this information certainly did not come from Jocelin.

From this therefore it is clear that *BA* did not necessarily use the most obvious source for its information. It had access to sources which in some cases it is possible to identify, even where these no longer survive. One of these, used for the *lectiones* for St Kentigern, was Jocelin's *codiculum stilo Scottico dictatum*; its identification is of great value in helping to untangle the source problems of Jocelin's *vita*.

2. *St Constantine*

If St Kentigern is Strathclyde's senior saint, he achieved his position at the expense of others; and the patron of the ancient Celtic church of Govan, with its wealth of tenth- and eleventh-century sculpture, seems

¹⁰ *VK*, 159-61.

to have been eclipsed as Glasgow rose to prominence in the twelfth century.

It is perhaps surprising that Govan appears not to have been the source of *BA*'s information about St Constantine. The *lectiones* for St Constantine's day (11 March) may be a case where *BA*'s compilers had little to go on.¹¹ They do not associate St Constantine's relics with any particular kirk or place, nor do they mention a *vita* from which the *lectiones* are drawn; this seems to indicate that there was no strong local cult of Constantine by the time *BA* was drawn together. Galloway and Kintyre are mentioned, as are St Columba and St Kentigern; but there is nothing to indicate the existence of a *vita* setting forth the pretensions of a particular kirk.

Who was St Constantine? There is no shortage of candidates. There was a west country tyrant, called Constantine by Gildas, *c.* 540.¹² Another person of the same name, possibly a descendant of his, entered religion about 50 years later.¹³ Jocelin of Furness tells us that Constantine of Govan was a son of Rhydderch Hael (d. *c.* 614), born to his queen late in life.¹⁴ A British saint of the same name is cited in the Irish martyrologies on 11 March, while the scholastic notes appended to *Felire Oenguso* mention "Constantine son of Fergus, king of Alba".¹⁵ The name appears in British and Irish hagiology, but it is doubtful that we can ever hope to identify this person securely.

In my earlier papers on this subject¹⁶ I pointed out that the personal name Constantine was frequently found among the dynasty of Kenneth

¹¹ *BA*, PH, 11 March; text, translation and commentary in A. Macquarrie, "Lectons for St Constantine's Day (11 March) in the Aberdeen Breviary", *The Society of Friends of Govan Old: fifth annual Report* (1995), 25-32.

¹² *Gildas: the Ruin of Britain (De Excidio Britanniae)*, ed. M. Winterbottom (Chichester, 1978), cap. 28-9.

¹³ E. Phillimore, "Annales Cambriae and Old Welsh Genealogies from Harleian MS 3859", *Y Cymmrodor*, ix (1888), 141-83, at 156.

¹⁴ *VK*, 219.

¹⁵ *Felire Oengusa*, ed. W. Stokes (Henry Bradshaw Soc., 1905), 81, 92-7.

¹⁶ A. Macquarrie, "Early Christian Govan: the Historical Context", *ante*, xxiv (1990), 1-17; *idem*, "The Historical Context of the Govan Stones", in *Govan and its early medieval Sculpture*, ed. A. Ritchie, (Stroud, 1994), 27-32.

mac Alpin (d. c. 859). They claimed descent, rightly or wrongly, from the Cenel nGabrain, a Kintyre branch of the Dal Riata of Argyll. The name appears in that branch of the family which became earls of Fife (sometimes called the Clan MacDuff)¹⁷ down to the 12th century. It was borne by the son of Kenneth who was king of Scots when Strathclyde was first incorporated into the Scottish kingdom (Constantine mac Kenneth, 862-877); this is also the period when the Govan stonecarving school starts to be active.¹⁸

Virtually nothing is known of Kenneth's father, Alpin son of Eochaid, except for one apparently reliable "fact": he campaigned in Galloway and died fighting there (tradition places his death in Glen App, near the mouth of Loch Ryan).¹⁹ There was an important dedication to St Constantine a few kilometers north, at Colmonell. There can be little doubt that the name Kirkconstantine, applied to Colmonell in the Middle Ages, comes from an earlier Gaelic *Cille Chaustannin* – the same name that has yielded Kilchousland in Kintyre.²⁰ It is tempting to speculate that the dedication in Galloway represents Cenel nGabrain expansion into Galloway in the second quarter of the 9th century, just as the dedication at Govan appears to represent the advance of the same dynasty into Strathclyde some fifty years later.

The *lectiones* do not appear to derive from a *vita* written in the interest of a particular cult centre, and they are wholly independent of the traditions mentioned in Jocelin's *Vita Kentigerni*. The author knew of traditions linking Constantine with the kingship of Cornwall, with Ireland, with Kintyre and Galloway, and with the Glasgow/Strathclyde area. Beyond that, the evidence does not allow us to say.

¹⁷ J. Bannerman, "MacDuff of Fife", in *Medieval Scotland: Crown, Lordship and Community: Essays presented to G.W.S. Barrow*, edd. A. Grant and K. Stringer (Edinburgh, 1993), 20-38.

¹⁸ See A. Macquarrie, "The Kings of Strathclyde, c. 400-1018", in *ibid.*, 1-19; also the articles cited in n. 10 above, and Ritchie, *Govan*, *passim*.

¹⁹ Anderson, *Early Sources*, i, 270.

²⁰ W.F.H. Nicolaisen, *Scottish Place Names* (London, 1976), 108-11; W.J. Watson, *The History of the Celtic Place Names of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1926, reprinted Edinburgh, 1993), 188-9.

3. *St Teneu (St Enoch)*

St Kentigern's mother received some ferocious ill-treatment during her lifetime, and subsequently she has fared little better. Her name has been corrupted out of all recognition; her handsome church in Glasgow burned down in 1925 and was never rebuilt;²¹ the architecturally admired hotel and the railway station which bore her name were swept away in the 1960s; and their site is now occupied by a massive glass and metal pyramid full of shops identical with the shops found in similar glass-covered shopping centres all over the British Isles.

The *lectiones* for St Teneu in *BA* are closely connected with the story of St Teneu in the now fragmentary *Historia Beati Kentigerni* composed for Bishop Herbert of Glasgow c. 1150, though very much abbreviated. The saint is called *Thaneuu*, her father's kingdom is *Laudonia*; when she rejects her aspirant lover *Euuen*, son of the king of Cumbria, she is banished to the care of a swineherd; her lover, dressed as a woman, viciously rapes her in a solitary place; she is cast from a high hill in a cart, whose wheel-marks dent the hard stone, then cast adrift in a boat from a port called *Aberledy*; the boat carries her out to *Maya Insula*, then back to *Culros*, where Kentigern is born; he subsequently founds the church of Glasgow, and now reigns on high with his mother, who is honourably buried in the city of Glasgow.²²

All of these points, with the exception of the name of Aberlady (for the Herbertian *vita*'s *Aberlessic*), and the fact that Teneu is buried in Glasgow, appear in the surviving fragment of the Herbertian *vita*. The first is a late medieval attempt to identify the lost *Aberlessic* with a roughly similar East Lothian place-name which would fit the story, although the identification might not satisfy modern place-name scholars. The second point is presumably based on tradition current in Glasgow, where St Teneu's church stood at the west end of the Trongate, a street in medieval times known as *the vicus Sancte Tenew*.²³ The *BA* spelling of her name, *Theneuu*, also differs from H's

²¹ F. Worsdall, *The City that disappeared* (Glasgow, 1981), 80.

²² *BA*, PE, 18 July.

²³ A. Gibb, *Glasgow: the Making of a City* (London, 1983), 15-16; see, for example, Vatican Archives, Reg. Supp., 919, 140v (8 July 1490).

Thaney', and was presumably similarly derived from current Glasgow tradition.

Professor MacQueen has suggested that the *BA* office of Teneu is not derived from the Herbertian *vita* as we know it, but from an intermediate, and he suggests a lost Glasgow *Life of Teneu* drawn entirely from the Herbertian *vita*.²⁴ This argument does not take into account the likely existence at Aberdeen of a *Historia Beati Kentigerni* which was a copy of the Herbertian *vita*, apparently more complete than the surviving fragment, and from which Fordun quotes.²⁵ Professor MacQueen may be right, but we do not actually need to posit a lost Glasgow *Life of Teneu* based on the surviving fragment of the Herbertian *vita* as the source of *BA*'s *lectiones* for St Teneu, since it is likely that Aberdeen Cathedral had, or had access to, a copy of the Herbertian *vita*.

It is worth mentioning in passing that there is more than a hint of the pagan supernatural in the story of Teneu. One characteristic of semidivine or euhemeristic figures in Irish heroic literature is that they were very difficult to kill, often requiring multiple deaths before they were finished;²⁶ and Teneu's tenacious resistance to death after being cast off a cliff and thrown into the sea suggests that she shared this characteristic. The area needs to be explored by experts on Celtic mythology, but I suspect that this is the direction in which we should be looking for the origin of these details in the story of St Teneu.

4. *St Corval*

The kirk of Inchinnan (demolished in 1965 to prepare the approaches to the main runway of Glasgow Airport) stood on a small grassy knoll rising above a bend in the River Cart, on the left (west) bank close to Inchinnan Bridge (NS 491680). Old maps show a curvilinear enclosure, which is still followed by the kirkyard wall on its south side nearest the river, and which corresponds very closely to the 5m.

²⁴ J. MacQueen, "A Lost Glasgow Life of St Thaney (St Enoch)", *IR*, vi (1955), 125-30.

²⁵ Fordun quotes from it: *Chron. Fordun*, lib. iii, cap. 9, 29; see below, p. 43.

²⁶ F.J. Byrne, *Irish Kings and High-kings* (London, 1973), 97-102.

contour line on modern OS maps. The knoll, situated in the flood-plain of the Cart, must in earlier times have been surrounded by water for much of the year.

Within the enclosure were formerly three early Christian stones, of which there are a number of descriptions; their present display at the new kirk at Inchinnan village, whither they were removed at the time of the demolition of the previous church, sets them out on uniform brick plinths, concealing to the casual observer the fact that they are very different from each other. One is the shaft of a free-standing ringed cross, with the stump of the ring still visible at the constriction where the head has broken off. One is a recumbent graveslab, very similar in type to the many examples found at Govan, two miles upriver. The third and most unusual is also a recumbent grave marker, but carvings on its sides indicate that it must have been raised above ground level, and it is likely that it was a shrine of some kind, possibly a sarcophagus cover. There is reference in the *BA lectiones* to an *ymago* or shrine of St Conval which was believed in the middle ages to have had healing properties, and this stone may well have been part of it.

The early history of Inchinnan is obscure. It is dedicated to St Conval, whose name appears to show Bretonnic influence: **Cuno-ualdos*, "hound ruler", should yield *Conall* in Gaelic. No *vita* survives, but the *lectiones* in *BA* appear to show the former existence of one, which set forth the pretensions of Inchinnan as a place of healing.

Separated from Inchinnan Kirkyard by the confluence of the White and Black Cart Waters, is a small group of stones which has received much less attention. Locally known as the "Argyll Stone" because of the capture there of the Earl of Argyll in 1685, but also called by the older name of "St Conval's Chair",²⁷ the Renfrew group is now surrounded by high railings erected in the last century by Lord Blythswood (on whose estate they stood, near the White Cart Water north of Inchinnan Road); these make them difficult to study (NS 495678). There are now two stones side by side. One of them is clearly the base or socket-stone of a standing cross, very similar in shape to the

²⁷ D. Craig, "The early medieval Sculpture of the Glasgow Area", in Ritchie, *Govan and its early medieval Sculpture*, 73-91, at 87.

socket-stone of the Barochan Cross (now abandoned in a field near Houston, while the cross itself has been moved inside Paisley Abbey), but considerably smaller in scale, and with a very small and shallow socket, well off-centre and apparently unfinished. Beside the cross base, immediately to the west, is another stone, slightly smaller, with a rounded top. The general shape is in some ways reminiscent of a small hogback stone, but very much smaller than any of the examples at Govan, and without any trace of decoration. The stone is weathered, covered with moss, and difficult to see because of the railings; it appears that it may have been shaped, but any detailed carving, if there ever was any, has disappeared without trace. There are no traces of the end-beasts or *tegulae* typical of the Govan group of hogbacks. Although there are no certain examples at Govan, in Northern England and at Inchcolm hogback stones sometimes lay in relation to upright monuments, and the group at Renfrew may have been intended as a composite grave-marker of this type.

A legend regarding this stone is preserved in the *lectiones* for St Conval's day (28 September) in *BA*.²⁸ These *lectiones* appear to derive from a *vita* or collection of traditions setting forth the pretensions of Inchinnan and with access to local traditions and topographical knowledge, and which also stress St Conval's connection with St Kentigern and Glasgow Cathedral.

It may be possible to assign an approximate date to the *vita* from which these *lectiones* are apparently drawn. Inchinnan kirk was excepted from King Malcolm IV's grant of the churches of Strathgryfe to Paisley Abbey in 1163; presumably the reason was that it had already been granted to the Templars, probably by David I.²⁹ Inchinnan is not claimed for Glasgow in David's inquest of c. 1113 x 1124. But the *Historia Beati Kentigerni* written for Bishop Herbert of Glasgow (1147 x 1164) may have claimed just such a relationship between St Conval and St Kentigern which would have entitled Glasgow Cathedral to claim Inchinnan as part of its *parochia*. Fordun quotes a passage

²⁸ *BA*, PE, 28 September.

²⁹ *Paisley Registrum*, 7; *RRS*, i, 98, 169.

which appears to come from a lost part of this *Historia Beati Kentigerni*, which makes the same claim:

*Contemporaneus vero cum sancto Columba beatissimus floruit Kentigernus Glascuensis episcopus, vir mirande sanctitatis, et multorum operator miraculorum, cuius ibidem ossa veneranda, multis ad laudem Dei clarificata miraculis, tumultata requiescunt. Eius versus austrum episcopatus tunc temporis ultimus finis fuerat, ut esse modo de iure debeat, ad crucem regiam infra Stanemore. Unus vero discipulorum eius precipuus erat sanctus Convalhus, miraculis clarus et virtutibus, cuius itaque ossa sepulta quiescunt apud Inchenane iuxta Glascu.*³⁰

The claims of the diocese of Glasgow to stretch as far south as the Rere Cross on Stainmoor Common belonged to the reign of David I, and were abandoned by Malcolm IV by his treaty with Henry II in 1157.³¹ Glasgow's claim to Inchinnan kirk had probably been abandoned earlier (x 1153), when David apparently granted it to the Templars.

A clerk of Glasgow cathedral and admirer of Bishop Herbert, who composed a Latin verse account of the battle of Renfrew and death of Somerled in 1164, attributes the victory to St Kentigern.³² He makes no mention of St Conval; clearly attempts to link Inchinnan with Glasgow had been abandoned by this time. On the other hand, Inchinnan is not claimed as property of Glasgow cathedral in Earl David's inquest (1113 x 1124). So we may safely assert that Glasgow's unsuccessful attempts to acquire Inchinnan were confined to David I's period as lord of Cumbria and his reign as king of Scots, i.e. 1113 x 1153. Perhaps more narrowly we can date these claims to the earlier part of Herbert's episcopate. The *lectiones* seem to derive, then, from a *vita* of St Conval written in the interest of Glasgow Cathedral 1113 x 1153, probably c. 1150.

³⁰ *Chron. Fordun*, lib. iii, cap. 29.

³¹ G.W.S. Barrow, "The Anglo-Scottish Border", in his *The Kingdom of the Scots* (1973), 139-61.

³² In *Chron. Fordun*, ed. Skene, 449-51; trans. Anderson, *Early Sources*, ii, 256-8.

5. *St Patrick*

The kirk of Kilpatrick on the Clyde, now Old Kilpatrick, seems to have been an important early Christian centre before the twelfth century, and may be regarded as the “minster” church for a large area between the River Leven and the Whiteinch Burn,³³ including the later parishes of Dumbarton³⁴ and Old and New Kilpatrick. The modern kirkyard stands on rising ground above the flood plain of the Firth of Clyde, about 0.5 km. east of the site of the Roman fort at Kilpatrick (now covered by a bus depot) which stood at the western end of the Antonine Wall (NS464730).³⁵ A gentle bend in Dumbarton Road where it skirts the kirkyard on the south may indicate part of the line of a curvilinear enclosure, but there is no visible trace of the original enclosure to the north, where the modern graveyard has been extended.

A few medieval remains within the kirkyard are indicative of antiquity: there is a medieval effigy of a knight in armour, once recumbent to the south-east of the kirk, but now propped up against the west wall of the kirk (built in 1812)³⁶ north of the tower; and built into the Hamilton burial aisle north west of the present kirk are some medieval carved corbels and other fragments. A drawing of the medieval church made prior to its demolition shows that there was a row of tall round-headed windows set in pairs between buttresses on the south side, with a round-headed porch near the centre of the south wall. There was a late bell-turret on the west gable, and low

³³ For the Whiteinch Burn as boundary of the parish of Govan and the barony of Glasgow, see J. Durkan, “The Bishops’ Barony of Glasgow in pre-Reformation Times”, *ante*, xxii (1986), 277-301, at 301.

³⁴ According to I.B. Cowan, *The Parishes of Medieval Scotland* (1967), the parish of Dumbarton does not appear on record until the 14th century, and New Kilpatrick does not have a separate existence in the medieval period. Cf. s.nn. Kilpatrick, Dumbarton.

³⁵ L. Keppie, *Scotland's Roman Remains* (Edinburgh, 1986), 142-3; D.J. Breeze, *Roman Scotland: a Guide to the visible Remains* (Newcastle, 1979), 11-15. The Roman fort was at NS 461730.

³⁶ A.D. Eunson, *Old Kilpatrick and Christianity* (Dumbarton, n.d. [1962]), 21-3.

outbuildings at the west end and south-east corner.³⁷ A water-colour painting taken from Dalnottar Hill (close to the site of the present Kilpatrick Railway Station) shows the east end of the old church, with three tall narrow windows in the east wall.³⁸

The effigy depicts a knight in full armour, his head resting on a pillow supported by winged angels, his hands joined in prayer on his breast. The stone is said once to have lain in the church. It was clearly carved for a wealthy aristocrat. The date is uncertain, but could be c. 1300. There were once at least two other medieval stones in the churchyard, one a plain coped tombstone,³⁹ and the other a decorated slab of "West Highland" type.⁴⁰

There are no visible remains of an earlier period *in situ*. A fragment of an early Christian cross-shaft from Old Kilpatrick is now preserved in Kelvingrove Art Gallery in Glasgow.⁴¹ A very fine cross-shaft, removed from the grounds of Mountblow House to the same museum, had earlier been used as a bridge across the Dalnottar Burn at Sandyford, and probably came originally from Old Kilpatrick or nearby. The drawing of this in *Early Christian Monuments of Scotland* is inaccurate, is reproduced in mirror-image, and fails to do justice to the quality of the carving on the stone.⁴²

These two stones, one certainly and the other probably from Kilpatrick, are physical evidence for an important early Christian church on the site. There is literary evidence as well. Early in the 13th century, the parish of Kilpatrick was acquired by Paisley Abbey, and the monks entered into extensive litigation to acquire lands belonging to

³⁷ J. Bruce, *History of the Parish of West or Old Kilpatrick* (Glasgow, 1893; reprinted Clydebank, 1995), 101.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, frontispiece.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 103 and 247.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 103.

⁴¹ J. Anderson and J.R. Allen, *Early Christian Monuments of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1903; reprinted Forfar 1993) [hereafter *ECMS*], iii, 452-3.

⁴² *ECMS*, iii, 451-2, copying the drawing from Bruce, *History of the Parish of West or Old Kilpatrick*; Macquarrie, "Early Christian Govan", 1, 4; and since the above was written see also C. Batey, "The Sculptured Stones in the Glasgow Museums", in Ritchie, *Govan*, 63-72, at 63-5.

the kirk which had been alienated at various times. In their various charters,⁴³ the following lands which can now be identified are mentioned as belonging to Kilpatrick: Cochno, Craigbanzo (north of Faifley; in the 13th century this was *Craigbentalach*, in the 16th it had become *Craigbanneoch*),⁴⁴ Kilbowie, Duntiglennan (*Drumtechghunan*), Duntocher, Dalnottar, Edinbarnet, Faifley (*Fimbelach*), Lusset, Boquhanran (earlier *Monachkenneran*, then *Monquhanren*). These names all still exist as district or street names in the Clydebank area.

Some of the places named in charters, probably also in the Clydebank area but whose names do not survive into modern times, are Dalleuenach, Drumcreue (= *druim craobh*, “ridge of trees”), *Drumdinanis*. 16th-century confirmations of the lands of the Hamilton commendators of Paisley mention other lands, such as Blawarthill (between Yoker and Scotstoun), which do not figure in the earliest records.⁴⁵

A glimpse of the Celtic, “pre-feudal” state of the kirk of Kilpatrick is afforded by an assize held in the 1230s to determine the ownership of certain lands.⁴⁶ Many of the witnesses were Gaelic-speaking laymen who could describe the situation which had existed c. 1170. One witness described how “a certain Beda Ferdan had had a large thatched house (*magna domus de virgis*) beside the kirk of Kilpatrick to the east, and he held the lands of Boquhanran, ... holding them in the name of the church for no other service than receiving and feeding guests coming to the kirk; when [the witness] was a boy he and his father had been received there. Beda Ferdan also held the lands of Kilbowie and Duntiglennan.” Another witness stated that afterwards Cristinus (perhaps for Gaelic Gille-Crist) son of Beda held these lands on the same terms; and that the kirklands were divided in four parts, one of which Beda held himself, and the other three divided the [care of the] guests between them. Other witnesses told the same story: that Beda Ferdan and his family had maintained a house for pilgrims beside the

⁴³ *Paisley Registrum*, 113-5, 157-73.

⁴⁴ *RMS*, v, nos. 128, 1320, 2070.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 128.

⁴⁶ *Paisley Registrum*, 166-8.

kirkyard of Kilpatrick, holding certain lands, notably Boquhanran, from a portion of whose proceeds he entertained pilgrims coming to the kirk. This situation went back to the days of Earl Alwin I in the 1170s, before the temporary acquisition of the earldom of Lennox by Earl David, King William's brother.⁴⁷ One witness stated that Earl David had tried to raise taxation from the kirklands, but was unsuccessful; another stated that Beda Ferdan had died in defence of the rights of the church, but said nothing more about the circumstances.

What were the attractions of Kilpatrick as a pilgrimage centre? The site of St Patrick's well is still visible, just a few meters south-west of the kirkyard. Its properties are described in the *lectiones* in *BA*: its waters gave "the external benefit of sight to the blind, and also the internal grace of literacy to the illiterate. Furthermore a stone lying beside this spring used to flow with water whenever a false or perjured witness placed his hand on it."⁴⁸

The stone no longer survives. There is a "St Patrick's Rock" in the Clyde, almost directly underneath the Erskine Bridge, near the south (Renfrewshire) shore; water regularly flows over it, but only at high tide. It is very doubtful whether it could be described as "a stone lying beside this spring", i.e., beside the well.

The *lectiones* record a tradition, well-known in medieval Scotland, that St Patrick had been born at Kilpatrick.⁴⁹ The *vita* from which these *lectiones* are derived appears not to be earlier than the late twelfth century; there are no allusions to other possessions of the kirk of Kilpatrick as enumerated in *Paisley Registrum*, such as one might expect to find in an early *vita*, and no real signs of antiquity. The name of Patrick's first captor, Milcho, is far removed from the earliest form, Miliucc, found in Muirchu's 7th-century *vita*.⁵⁰ The *lectiones* refer to

⁴⁷ On Earl David's acquisition of the earldom of Lennox, see *RRS*, ii, 257-8; K. Stringer, *Earl David of Huntington*, 13-18.

⁴⁸ *BA*, PH, 17 March.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Muirchu's *Vita Patricii* is edited in *The Patrician Texts in the Book of Armagh*, ed. L. Bieler (Dublin, 1979); also in *St Patrick: his Writings and Muirchu's Life*, ed. A.B.E. Hood (London, 1978); the name Miliucc is in caps. 11-12.

stories relating to Croaghpatrick and St Patrick's Purgatory in Lough Derg, which are relatively late additions to the Patrician "dossier".

However, traditions linking St Patrick with Dumbarton and the surrounding area go back a long way before Jocelin of Furness's 12th-century *Vita Patricii*, and it is worth examining the oldest traditions. In Patrick's own writings, he calls his birthplace *Bannavem Taburniae* or *Taberniae*.⁵¹ This should perhaps be read *ad Bannavem tabernae*, "at **Bannavis* of the tavern"; but no such place has been identified. An alternative reading of the name is *Bannaventa Berniae*, on the model of known Roman place-names in Britain, e.g. a *Bannaventa* in Northamptonshire and *Glannoventa*, now Ravenglass in Cumbria; *Berniae* is perhaps unlikely to be a corruption of *Bernicia*, the name of a large district east of the Pennines, but it may contain the same first element.⁵² Almost the only clue we have as to its identity is Muirchu's statement that *Bannavem Taburniae* lay near the Irish sea, and that he had discovered that it was identifiable with the town (*vicus*) known as *Ventre* (M 1). Patrick himself implies that it was easily accessible to sea-borne raiders. But as well as appearing in the form *Ventre*, in some later MSS the name also appears as *nemthor*, *nentria*; we should probably assume an original **Ventia* or **Ventria*.⁵³ This name looks close to the second element in *Bannaventa*, but can be no more readily identified.

The *Tripartite Life* (c. 900) and later *vitae* of St Patrick assert that he was a native of the kingdom of Strathclyde, having been born in the

⁵¹ Mentioned in his *Confessio*, in *ibid.*, cap. 1.

⁵² Hanson, *St Patrick*, 113-8; C. Thomas, *Christianity in Roman Britain* (London, 1989), 317-18. That *Bernicia* lay east of the Pennines is not contradicted by Bede's statement that in his day *Whithorn* "belongs (*pertinet*) to the province of *Bernicia*" (HE, iii, 4). This simply amplifies his previous statement, "the English hold it at this time" (*iam nunc Anglorum gens obtinet*), implying (as we know from archaeological and other evidence) that the north Solway shore was of recent acquisition. Galloway and Cumbria were not traditionally parts of *Bernicia*. See R. Cramp, *Whithorn and the Northumbrian Expansion westwards: 3rd Whithorn Lecture*, 17 September 1994 (Whithorn, 1995).

⁵³ On these variants, see Bieler, *Patrician Texts*, 66 and 66-7nn.

vicinity of Dumbarton Rock.⁵⁴ Medieval Scottish tradition, as we have seen, located Patrick's birthplace at Old Kilpatrick on the Clyde. Attempts have been made to locate Muirchu's *Ventre* in this area, for example with Fintry or Dalnottar, but these are unconvincing.⁵⁵

On the question of why the *Tripartite Life* should have made the identification of Patrick's birthplace with Dumbarton, I think we have to look no further than the place-name Kilpatrick. A name incorporating the Gaelic element *cill* and a dedication to a Gaelic saint cannot have developed before the penetration of Gaelic-speaking settlers into that area; and that penetration is unlikely to have begun too long before c. 870.⁵⁶ The evidence of the *Tripartite Life* suggests that the dedication of Kilpatrick was in existence by the time it was written (c. 900), but may not indicate anything else.

I have argued that Govan was founded by a descendant of Kenneth mac Alpin some time in the last quarter of the ninth century.⁵⁷ The stone-carving there, mostly of ninth to eleventh century date, together with the dedication to St Constantine, a saint with Cenel nGabrain associations, and documentary allusions to political upheaval in Strathclyde in this period, all point in this direction. Kilpatrick too is a dedication to a saint of the Gael; the name *Cill Patraic* is Gaelic, and so is hardly likely to be earlier than the arrival of Gaelic speech in the area.

It is inconceivable that oral tradition relating to the birthplace of St Patrick can have been preserved in the Strathclyde area for nearly 400 years and yet remained unknown to the writers of the *Book of Armagh*; the dedication to St Patrick appears to have come into the area, under

⁵⁴ *Vita Tripartita Sancti Patricii*, ed. W. Stokes (Rolls Series, 1877), 8.

⁵⁵ A. Boyle, "The Birthplace of St Patrick", *SHR*, ix (1981), 8-17, suggests Fintry. But the final f of **gwen-dref*, *Fyntrif*, *Fyntryf*, was still sounded centuries after Muirchu's time. Cf. Watson, *Celtic Place-Names*, 364.

⁵⁶ Macquarrie, "Early Christian Govan", 1-17; *idem*, "The Kings of Strathclyde, c. 400-1018". Nicolaisen, *Scottish Place-Names*, at 142-4, argues that the Kil- names "are in general not likely to be much younger than 800"; but this argument has to be modified in view of the fact that the Gaelic "conquest" of Strathclyde was about a generation later than that of Pictland, and settlement probably correspondingly later.

⁵⁷ Macquarrie, "Early Christian Govan", 12ff.; and see above, p. 38.

the influence of Gaelic speakers, between the time of the compilation of the *Book of Armagh* (early ninth century), whose *notulae* make no mention of Kilpatrick,⁵⁸ and the time of the compilation of the *Tripartite Life*. The dedication may have been prompted in part by the belief, expressed in the *Book of Armagh*, that Patrick's enemy Coroticus had been king of Dumbarton;⁵⁹ but it is not itself evidence to support that belief, or, for that matter, for the location of St Patrick's birthplace.

6. *St Kessog*

BA's *lectiones* for St Kessog are drawn from a *vita* which apparently originated at Luss or at least set out the claims of the kirk of Luss.⁶⁰ The parish has a very obscure history, but two incised cross-slabs in the kirkyard are evidence of an early Christian origin for the church. The shape, size and position of the burial enclosure point firmly in the same direction; and one "hogback" stone in the churchyard may do the same, though it is stylistically distinct from the Govan group, and some at least of its decoration cannot be earlier than the twelfth century.⁶¹

The date of the *vita* which is excerpted in *BA* cannot be precisely determined, but there are some features which may indicate a relatively early date. Kessog is claimed to be "from the city of Munster and the stock of the noblest kings of Ireland"; if this means that he was claimed to be of the Eoganacht, then he must have flourished before the 11th century, and a *vita* which remembered the greatness of that dynasty is perhaps not too much later. The form of the name of Munster used, *Mamonensis*, shows no Norse or later influence.

⁵⁸ These curious cryptic notes are edited in Bieler, *Patricial Texts*; also in J. Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus: The Book of Armagh* (Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, 1913), 36-7, 458-64.

⁵⁹ *Coirthech rex Aloo*, in the chapter headings to Muirchu's *vita*. It is not certain that these chapter headings are by Muirchu himself. In the text of the *vita* (cap. 29) the name is spelt *Corictic*.

⁶⁰ *BA*, PH, 10 March.

⁶¹ J. Lang, "The Govan Hogbacks: a reappraisal", in Ritchie, *Govan*, 123-31.

These indicators are not in themselves at all conclusive. More suggestive is this passage: "The father of this blessed man, while he ruled over this city with royal crown and sceptre, by the charity, love and affection which he had always held towards his fellow kings, invited them to dine with him for convivial purposes, and especially requested them to bring their sons with them." This appears to be a reference to the Celtic custom of subordination and fosterage, whereby the children of sub-kings were brought up or "fostered", effectively as hostages, at the court of an over-king.⁶² If so, it suggests that the original *vita* was of considerable antiquity; with the progress of feudalism in twelfth-century Scotland, the old kinship and social bonds which fosterage, clientship and hostage-taking had cemented gave way to feudal tenure. By the time it reached the compilers of *BA*, this element had become misunderstood, and the story has become a description of a late medieval chivalrous banquet.

So the original *vita* appears to belong to an age when the greatness of the Eoganacht of Munster was still remembered, and when fosterage was still practiced, or at least understood. As such it is unlikely to be later than the eleventh century. That there was an earlier *vita* is proved by the reference to it in the final *lectio*: *Quamplurima interim per eundem Dei virum alia fiebant miracula, que in eius latius distribuntur vita*. This would have begun with childhood miracles and proceeded with a description of Kessog's monastic career and miracles, concluding with his death and burial at Luss.

The Aberdeen version consists only of a few extracts from the beginning of the *vita*. These appear not to be complete even as far as they extend; there is a reference to Kessog *cogitans patris hortatu et persuasione*, although his father's advice has not been previously mentioned. So clearly even the fragment that survives is abbreviating and omitting from the *vita*.

The history of the kirk of Luss is obscure. It was erected into a canonry and prebend of Glasgow cathedral c. 1430, with the patronage

⁶² F.J. Byrne, *Irish Kings and high-kings* (1973), caps 1-3; G. Mac Niocaill, *Ireland before the Vikings* (1972), 28-32.

continuing with the Colquhouns of Luss down to the Reformation.⁶³ Unlike many kirks in the Glasgow area, it had not earlier been associated with the cathedral, and there is no evidence of claims being made by Glasgow in the twelfth century. Luss is not mentioned in David's inquest or in the twelfth-century *vitae* of Kentigern.

Conclusions

We have looked at the *lectiones* of six Strathclyde saints in BA: Kentigern, Constantine, Teneu, Conval, Patrick and Kessog. We have seen that in origin they are all different from one another. St Kentigern's *lectiones* are ultimately derived from a book (*codiculum*) of his life and miracles, probably largely in Latin but "in a Gaelic style", also used by Jocelin of Furness; it is therefore definitely earlier than c. 1180, and quite possibly eleventh-century. For St Constantine the compilers seem not to have had an earlier *vita*, and had to make do with traditions linking Constantine with Galloway and Kintyre; they seem not to have been aware of his shrine at Govan. For their material on St Teneu the compilers were ultimately indebted to the Herbertian *Historia Beati Kentigerni* of c. 1150; whether there was an intermediate Glasgow *vita* of St Teneu is debatable. For St Conval, the compilers had access to traditions, and possibly a *vita*, connected with Inchinnan, claiming a relationship between Inchinnan and Glasgow. Since this relationship was being pressed by Glasgow in the first half of the twelfth century and was abandoned soon after 1150 at the latest, we can date this *vita* to 1113 x 1153, probably c. 1150. For St Patrick, most of the information can be traced to Jocelin's *Vita Patricii* of c. 1185, amplified with local traditions from Old Kilpatrick. For St Kessog, the compilers used a *vita* composed in the interests of the church of Luss, which is unlikely to be later than the eleventh century, and could be even earlier.

Although there are significant differences, all these sets of *lectiones* have some points in common. Where there is reference to a *vita*, that *vita* is in no case demonstrably later than the twelfth century; in the cases of Kentigern and Kessog, it could well be earlier, and in those of

⁶³ Cowan, *Parishes*, s.n. Luss.

Conval and Teneu it is probably not later than 1150. The latest *vita* on which the compilers drew is Jocelin's *Vita Patricii* of c. 1185. For St Constantine they appear not to have had written traditions, but relied on relics, dedications and place-names. In some cases the source used is not the most obvious one which one would expect to have been available.

For all that the sets of saints' *lectiones* considered here may appear a somewhat random assembly, they do show geographical cohesion, and their analysis tells us much about the way in which the *propria sanctorum* of *BA* were compiled. They also suggest that there was a rich and varied collection of *vitae sanctorum*, mostly twelfth century and in some cases even earlier, on which the compilers could draw.

It is a curious irony that only a generation after *BA* guaranteed the survival of these hagiographic traditions, the protestant Reformation came to Scotland with a striking comprehensiveness. Devotion to saints and the whole apparatus of shrines, relics and pilgrimages, were outlawed and systematically suppressed during the 1560s and 1570s.⁶⁴ Reports of the burning of books and destruction of relics may have been exaggerated; certainly some statements can be demonstrated to be exaggerations, and there was little deliberate dismantling of buildings.⁶⁵ But there can be no doubt that, whether as a result of neglect or

⁶⁴ See, for examples of this, *Stirling Presbytery Records, 1581-1587*, ed. J. Kirk (Edinburgh, SHS, 1981).

⁶⁵ E.g., the popular statement that the reformers threw 100 stone crosses into the sea at Iona. Five high crosses survive, complete (St Martin's) or in fragmentary form (St John's, St Oran's, St Matthew's, and one unnamed). This number is comparable with that at Clonmacnoise or Kells, where there is no suggestion of mass destruction of crosses. The number at Govan may have been similar; cf. I. Fisher, "The Govan cross-shafts and early cross-slabs", in Ritchie, *Govan and its early medieval Sculpture*, 47-53. There is evidence that both St John's and St Oran's crosses on Iona collapsed, possibly more than once, long before the Reformation. See the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, *Argyll Inventory*, v: Iona (Edinburgh, 1982); on the Reformation on Iona, see M. Dilworth, "Iona Abbey and the Reformation", *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, xii (1971-1976), 77-109; A. Macquarrie, "Kings, Lords and Abbots: power and patronage at the medieval monastery of Iona", 371-3; and A. Macquarrie and E.M. Macarthur, *Iona through the Ages* (2nd edn., Coll, 1992) 19-23.

systematic destruction, the vast bulk of Scotland's liturgical and hagiographic writings have been lost.⁶⁶ What survives, the small number of twelfth-century *vitae* and the riches of *BA* based on twelfth-century and earlier *vitae*, provides a tantalizing glimpse of what must once have existed in a nation proud of its saintly traditions.

⁶⁶ This presents a seeming contrast with Ireland, from which survive more than 100 Latin *vitae* and about half as many composed in Irish; but most of them survive in, or were collected from, MSS outwith Ireland. Within Ireland "almost all early manuscripts have disappeared". Cf. R. Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints' Lives* (Oxford, 1991), chapter 1, esp. 4-7.